



Westinghouse Electric Company LLC

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U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission  
ATTN: Document Control Desk  
Washington, DC 20555

Attention: J. S. Wermiel, Chief  
Reactor Systems Branch  
Division of Systems Safety and Analysis

Subject: Fuel Criteria Evaluation Process Notification for Axial Blanket Modification

Dear Mr. Wermiel:

This letter serves as Westinghouse notification to the NRC, as required by the Westinghouse Fuel Criteria Evaluation Process (FCEP) SER, that the NRC-approved process in WCAP-12488-A is being used to account for a design modification to Westinghouse fuel.

Westinghouse described the use of solid axial blankets in WCAP-10444, "VANTAGE 5 Fuel Assembly" and annular axial blankets in WCAP-12610-P-A, "VANTAGE+ Fuel Assembly Reference Core Report." A typical blanket pellet stack height of 6 inches at the top and bottom of the fuel was reported in those applications. Westinghouse plans on increasing the blanket pellet stack height from 6 inches to 8 inches on 17X17 fuel products. This change may also be applied to other fuel products (e.g., 14X14 and 15X15).

The FCEP functional requirements that are potentially impacted by this change are (a) clad stress, (b) clad strain, (c) clad fatigue, (d) rod internal pressure, (e) fuel pellet overheating, (f) fuel clad temperature and (g) power distribution.

The impact on clad stress, clad strain, clad fatigue, fuel pellet overheating, and fuel clad temperature is insignificant. The rod internal pressure is reduced with 8 inch annular axial blankets resulting in an increase in the margin to the rod internal pressure limit. The overall effect on power distribution is within the normal variation seen cycle to cycle and will be reviewed on a cycle-specific basis as part of normal reload evaluations.

Initial application of this generic FCEP notification is planned for the Braidwood Unit 1 Cycle 9 fuel region which is planned to be inserted into Braidwood Unit 1 in April 2000.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H. A. Sepp', written in a cursive style.

H. A. Sepp, Manager  
Regulatory and Licensing Engineering

cc: S. D. Bloom, NRR